



VIRGIN LIMITED EDITION

Case Study

“It is vital to choose partners that **understand your business and will **support** you **tirelessly** behind the scenes in order to **protect** your brand.”**



Founder and MD www.virginlimitededition.com

Part of Sir Richard Branson's Virgin Group of business ventures, Virgin Limited Edition is a collection of vacation retreats that includes some of the world's prime real estate.

"UKFast's focus on customer service and pro-active support helped launch the Necker Nymph smoothly and successfully."

OVERVIEW

Before Sir Richard Branson unveiled the Necker Nymph to the world on The Oprah Winfrey Show in April 2010, UKFast's support team responded immediately to the call to prepare the Virgin Limited Edition website for massive increases in traffic. As millions tuned in to watch Branson's aero-submarine embark on its maiden voyage, behind the scenes UKFast's pre-emptive support ensured that the website and its associated property sites remained live and responsive despite an unprecedented lift in visitor numbers.

SITUATION

Joining Sir Richard Branson's privately owned collection of award-winning luxury retreats, the latest addition to Virgin Limited Edition is the world's first three-man underwater aircraft.

With an average audience of 6.2million viewers, The Oprah Winfrey Show was the perfect platform to share a unique interview with Sir Richard Branson and never-before-seen-footage of Necker Island and Necker Nymph to the world.

Lawrence Jones, managing director of UKFast, understands the responsibility UKFast has to each of its clients and guaranteed that his team of technical experts would develop a solution that could cope with the impact of such exposure on American TV. "Reputations on the internet are intrinsically linked to website reliability and performance. Internationally recognised brands need technology partners who can offer total availability. Virgin Limited Edition is no exception," says Jones.

"I was confident that we could guarantee 100 per cent uptime for Virgin Limited Edition."

To give the Necker Nymph's online home the clout it needed, UKFast engineers ran a load testing experiment on www.virginlimitededition.com which revealed that the server solution in place had an average response of 24 requests per second. The solution had been designed to accommodate a specific amount of resource and it was quickly identified that the current set up would have to be significantly amplified to sustain the estimated increase in traffic.

SOLUTION

With an array of busy national and international websites on the UKFast network, the support team is no stranger to handling peaks in traffic. Working closely with all clients to manage increased visitor levels when necessary, it has overseen many international product launches for computer gaming clients amongst hundreds of others.

As is often the case with top-secret projects, tight deadlines were designed to ensure exclusivity. At the point that UKFast was alerted to The Oprah Winfrey Show launch, there were less than 48 hours left to accommodate the predicted increase in traffic.

Lawrence Jones, who had been granted his own sneak peak of the revolutionary Nymph whilst holidaying on Necker Island just weeks before, felt sure that demand for this world exclusive would be high. With the website translated into multiple languages and visitors coming from most time zones a huge surge in traffic was expected.

Jones says, "Having experienced the unrivalled customer service that guests come to expect from the Virgin Limited Edition brand firsthand, I knew that nothing but the best would be expected from online users wanting to catch their first glimpse of Sir Richard's latest project."

"Working closely with Virgin Limited Edition's web developer Nicomon, I was confident that we could guarantee 100 per cent uptime for Virgin Limited Edition, as we do for all

“We like to work alongside companies driven by similar values to our own, like UKFast.”

customers, regardless of large upturns in traffic. Failure to do this would be like punishing a client for their popularity!”

Faced with a sharp spike in load and the inevitable impact this has on a server’s performance, the UKFast tech team immediately deployed its Webcelerator product – designed to sit in front of the Virgin Limited Edition website and its six corresponding property sites.

Once engineers were satisfied that the effects of The Oprah Winfrey Show had worn off 24 hours later, UKFast disabled its web acceleration service and returned the solution to a level that matched the regular demand.

BENEFITS

As a direct result of Webcelerator’s implementation, a new load test revealed that the solution was able to handle more than 1,000 requests per second - 40 times its normal capacity.

When traffic peaked at 9PM BST it was receiving more than ten times the normal level (50Mb/s).

Despite this it remained at a low background level because of the front end system put in place to protect it.

“We choose our business partners carefully, and UKFast’s emphasis on customer service and proactive support proved vital when unveiling Necker Nymph to such a large audience. The attention to detail ensured that all traffic resulting from The Oprah Winfrey Show broadcast was handled smoothly and without any hiccups,” Virgin said.

With a reputation for offering the ultimate in luxury destinations, Virgin Limited Edition is synonymous with delivering the highest levels of customer service, a quality which UKFast also prides itself on.

“The web is no longer a level playing field,” says Lawrence Jones. “The presentation of a brand online is about the whole experience, from the look of the website to the tone of the content and the speed of the delivery. Getting any element of this wrong can have a catastrophic effect on your opportunities. Working closely with our clients we relish the challenge of anticipating and outmanoeuvring the obstacles to keep the UK’s best businesses at the top of their game.”

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